

FirstNet remains focused on year-end RFP release, officials say

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There is a lot of work to be done, but [FirstNet](#) still plans to release its much-anticipated final request-for-proposal (RFP) document by the end of this year as preparation continues for the FirstNet board meeting that is scheduled to be conducted in less than four weeks, according to a spokesman for the organization.

FirstNet employees are proceeding based on the notion that the RFP will be issued by the end of the year—a date that is less than seven weeks away—but the final decision on the timing will be made by the board, FirstNet spokesman Ryan Oremland said during an interview with [IWC](#)
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. During the last FirstNet board meeting in October, FirstNet CEO Mike Poth acknowledged that the RFP release could be delayed until early 2016, if additional time is needed to address key topics that could impact the procurement's success.

FirstNet last month received 40 responses to its public notice related to its proposed cybersecurity strategy, according to Oremland. This input is expected to be integrated into the final RFP's cybersecurity language—a section that was not addressed when FirstNet released its draft RFP documents in April.

Last month, FirstNet released its final legal interpretations on several key issues, including policies associated with the ability for state or territory to “opt out” of FirstNet and build the [LTE](#) radio access network (RAN) portion of the system in its jurisdiction. In the legal interpretation, FirstNet clarified its intent to have opt-out states contribute any excess revenues to FirstNet to help build out the emergency-communications system in the rest of the country, just as FirstNet would do if it were deploying the network in the jurisdiction.

While this important point has been clarified, questions remain on other topics, including who can get priority access to the FirstNet system and when. Members of the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) have been studying proposals associated with priority and preemption for more than a year, but no official FirstNet policy has been established. Similarly, the definition of a “public-safety entity” that can qualify for priority access on the network has been the subject of

two public-notice proceedings, but a final legal interpretation on the matter has not been proposed.

Oremland noted that the PSAC is scheduled to meet immediately before the December FirstNet board meeting in Houston. The priority-and-preemption topic is expected to be discussed during the PSAC meeting, but Oremland declined to speculate whether the group would submit a proposal or a report to the board during the December meeting.

Under the current plans, FirstNet would release the RFP by the end of this year, allowing bidders to submit their proposals by the middle of 2016, after which FirstNet will evaluate the bids and select a partner by early 2017. At that point, FirstNet hopes to prepare and present deployment plans to each state and territory throughout 2017, so governors can make their opt-out decisions in late 2017 and allow the nationwide buildout process to begin.

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